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U.S. Department of Justice
Community Relations Service

The Community Relations Service

Assistance in the Resolution of Community Disputes Based on Race, Ethnic or National Origin

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Cover photography courtesy of Pat Krongard.

Responsibilities of the Community Relations Service

The Community Relations Service has two statutory mandates under Federal law: resolution of disputes through conciliation and mediation and the care, placement and processing of Cubans and Haitians.

Conciliation and Mediation

The first responsibility of the Community Relations Service (CRS) is set forth in Title X of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000g): "It shall be the function of the Service to provide assistance to communities and persons therein in resolving disputes, disagreements, or difficulties relating to discriminatory practices based on race, color, or national origin . . . ."

The agency provides direct conciliation and mediation assistance to communities to facilitate the peaceful, voluntary resolution of racial and ethnic disputes or conflict. This basic mission is carried out through 10 regional offices that are alerted to community problems by local officials seeking assistance, by other interested parties, through direct observation by CRS staff, or through news media reports.

Disputes that are determined to be within CRS' mandate are carefully assessed to evaluate such factors as the specific issues involved, the various parties involved and their position on the issues, whether the dispute can be resolved through CRS' concilation and mediation process.

The agency initiates whatever steps are necessary to begin making progress toward bringing about a resolution beginning with extensive discussions with public officials and local community leaders. CRS will first attempt to resolve conflicts through informal conciliation. However, if the agency and the parties determine that formal negotiations offer the best hope for a settlement, the agency arranges and medi-

ates the negotiations.

When disputes have reached the courts and a judge believes that the dispute may be resolved through less-costly mediation, the judge may refer the case to the Community Relations Service for mediation between the parties.

There are three major categories of problems in the conciliation and mediation program area:

- Administration of Justice
- Education
- General Community Relations

Within these three areas the agency's expertise includes the assessment and reduction of racial tension and risk of civil disorder, perceptions of disparity in the treatment of minorities, appropriate police use of force, containment and reduction of racial harassment, developing educational materials and programs in police/community relations, and responding to problems involving refugees and cross-cultural understanding.

The agency's approach to all of these problems, as an impartial third-party intervenor, is to assist communities in coping with the broad range of changing patterns in racial/ethnic relations. The priority is always to help communities and their residents settle their differences in a way that is fair and just for everyone. There is no cost to communities for the services provided by the Community Relations Service, and CRS can respond to racial and ethnic conflicts and disputes anywhere. If tensions are serious and the outbreak of violence or disorder imminent, CRS can respond on very short notice.

Immigration and Refugee Affairs

The second CRS responsibility involves the care, processing and resettlement of Cuban and Haitian entrants into the United States as authorized by Title V of the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-442). Executive

Order 12341 of January 21, 1982 transferred the program to the U.S. Department of Justice from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and this responsibility was assigned to the agency by the Attorney General on March 6, 1983. These Cuban and Haitian refugees came to the United States during the Cuban "boatlift" of 1980 and afterwards.

The mission of the Cuban and Haitian Entrant Program (CHEP) is to provide assistance for persons in detention or institutional care facilities and placement and resettlement services for those who are released from the Immigration and Naturalization Service detention centers.

Because of the particular circumstances of their arrival in this country, the Cuban and Haitian entrants have been assigned a different status than other immigrants or refugees. Thus, CRS' activities related to their care and resettlement are carried out under a complex array of legislative, administrative, and judicial orders, policies, and procedures.

CRS Services Available to Public and Private Agencies and Organizations

The Community Relations Service is, as its name implies, a service organization. Examples of agencies, organizations, and groups which use its services include:

- **Law Enforcement Agencies:** Mediation of disputes with minority groups and provision of technical assistance, including training in conflict management, assessments of recruiting programs, establishment and evaluation of firearms policies and police/ community relations, and identification of models for effective citizen- participation.
- **Schools:** Mediation of disputes with parent's organizations, in-service training

of teachers and school staff in conflict management, cross-cultural communication, refugee populations, and resolution of residual problems of school desegregation.

- **Non-Profit Agencies and Community Groups:** Conciliation and Mediation of problems stemming from alleged or actual racial or ethnic discrimination.
- **Federal Judges:** Mediation of court-referred suits alleging racial or ethnic discrimination as an alternative to protracted litigation.
- **Prison and Jail Administrators:** Conciliation or mediation of inmate civil rights grievances, training in conflict management, and settlement of prison racial conflict.
- **Federal, State and Local Agencies:** Conciliation of disputes with minority citizens concerning the implementation and operation of their programs and provision of training to agency officials in such areas as recruitment and conflict management.
- **Business and Industry:** Settlement of disputes occurring in the workplace which contribute to racial and ethnic tension or violence, or for halting or impeding business operations.

For More Information

There are no formal requirements for requesting the agency's assistance, except in applying for a grant under the Cuban Haitian Entrant Program. Information about the agency, its services, and whether a specific problem meets the criteria for assistance may be obtained by calling, writing, or visiting any CRS office.

Community Relations Service Offices

Regional Offices

Region I (New England)
Room 1192
10 Causeway Street
Boston, MA 02222-1032
617/565-6830
(FTS) 835-6830

Region II (Northeast)
Room 3402
26 Federal Plaza
New York, NY 10278
212/264-0700
(FTS) 264-0700

Region III (Mid-Atlantic)
Room 309
2nd & Chestnut Streets
Philadelphia, PA 19106
215/597-2344
(FTS) 597-2344

Region IV (Southeast)
Room 900
75 Piedmont Avenue
Atlanta, GA 30303
404/331-6883
(FTS) 242-6883

Region V (Midwest)
Room 1113
175 West Jackson St.
Chicago, IL 60604
312/353-4391
(FTS) 353-4391

Region VI (Southwest)
Room 13B-35
1100 Commerce Street
Dallas, TX 75242
214/767-0824
(FTS) 729-0824

Region VII (Central)
Room 2411
911 Walnut Street
Kansas City, MO 64104
816/426-2022
(FTS) 867-2022

Region VIII (Rocky Mt.)
Room 650
1244 Speer Blvd.
Denver, CO 80204
303/844-2973
(FTS) 564-2973

Region IX (Western)
Room 1040
211 Main Street
San Francisco, CA
94105
415/974-0101
(FTS) 454-0101

Region X (Northwest)
Room 1898
915 Second Avenue
Seattle, WA 98174
206/442-4465
(FTS) 399-4465

Field Offices

Room 100
51 First Ave SW
Miami, FL 33130
305/536-5206
(FTS) 350-4261

Room 12617
515 Rusk Avenue
Houston, TX 77002
713/229-2861
(FTS) 526-4861

Room 608
213 W. Lafayette Blvd.
Detroit, MI 48226
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Suite 330
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